



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

For Immediate Release:

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Greenbelt Woman Sentenced in Theft from Her Employer

A Greenbelt woman has been sentenced to six months in jail for her role in the theft of over \$54,000 from a Laurel manufacturer of ornamental fencing. Rhiannon Marie Manuel, 38, formerly of the 8400 block of Greenbelt Rd., pleaded guilty to a single count of theft between \$10,000 and \$100,000 last August 17 and was sentenced by Howard County Circuit Court Judge Timothy J. McCrone this morning.

During the August plea hearing Assistant State's Attorney Tricia Cecil told the court that Manuel, who worked in sales at Iron World Fencing, L.L.C, intercepted checks mailed to the firm by its customers and gave them to her cousin, Melissa Dawn Jessee, who deposited them into her personal bank account. Cecil stated that 13 checks received between February 25 through July 21, 2015 were deposited into Jessee's bank and that police had obtained bank video surveillance as evidence of those deposits. The theft scheme was discovered when customers of the firm disputed open balances on their accounts that had been previously paid by check. Cecil stated that the stolen proceeds were split by the two women, with the most going to Rhiannon Manuel.

Jessee, 46, of College Park, also pleaded guilty to the theft scheme last August and was sentenced to 30 days in jail, plus 40 hours of community service after making partial restitution. A civil judgment of \$10,776.05 was entered against her and she was placed on supervised probation.

At Manuel's sentencing hearing, this morning, Cecil told the judge that Manuel was "the more culpable party" in the scheme because she occupied a position of trust with her employer. Judge McCrone noted that Manuel had no prior criminal record but that she "had a duty of loyalty to protect them (the employer)." He sentenced her to a six-month sentence, recommended her for the work-release program, entered a judgment of in favor of the employer's insurance company, and placed her on two years of supervised probation upon release.

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